



Organization of African Unity

**Statement by H.E. Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim  
Secretary General of the OAU to the 23<sup>rd</sup>  
Ordinary Session of the Ad Hoc Committee  
of Fourteen on Structural Reform**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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**Mr. Chairman,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me first to congratulate Ambassador Charles KILEO, the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania for his election as Chairman of the Committee on Structural Reform and assure him of the fullest cooperation of the General Secretariat to assist him in discharging his responsibilities. I wish also to seize this opportunity to pay a special tribute to his predecessor Ambassador Simataa Akapelwa of Zambia for the able and dedicated manner with which he had conducted the work of the Committee. Knowing your own commitment to the enhancement of the role and efficiency of our Continental Organization and its General Secretariat and knowing also your vast and rich experience in national and international public affairs, I am convinced that the Committee is in the same good hands as those of your distinguished predecessor.

Mr. Chairman,

Today's meeting is a crucial one because of the importance of the issue it is expected to address which is the restructuring of the General Secretariat. This meeting is not, therefore, one of those meetings to discuss routine issues. It is a meeting to deliberate on the future of the General Secretariat as one of the important bodies of our Organization. This meeting comes as a result of a long process which has, over the years, evolved around the need to review the structure of the General Secretariat with a view to improving on its efficiency and effectiveness.

The call for structural review has gained momentum and strength over the most recent years as African leaders and concerned Africans have been increasingly urging for reform and renewal of the General Secretariat. It was, in that spirit, that in my report to Council and to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Harare, I undertook to vigorously pursue a programme of reform and renewal at the centre of which there is

the restructuring of the General Secretariat. In making this proposal, I was conscious of the on-going restructuring processes both at national and international levels including our Member States and other Organizations like ours. But more importantly, I was fully aware of the need for the General Secretariat to be reformed so as to enable it play its role and make itself relevant to the new exigencies of the situation and to the demands and aspirations of our Member States.

I was immensely encouraged by the support that my proposal received both from Council and the Summit in Harare. I was also encouraged by the enthusiasm with which the Committee on Structural Reform and indeed, all the Permanent Representatives of Member States of the OAU took up this challenge in the aftermath of the Harare meetings. Indeed, this was a logical pursuit of what we have, together, been able to achieve in giving our Continental Organization a new agenda focusing on promoting peace, security and socio-economic cooperation and integration on the Continent and strengthening unity, cohesion and solidarity among our countries and peoples.

It was, therefore, time for the General Secretariat to be reformed and adjusted to be able to carry out more efficiently its share of responsibility in the implementation of this agenda for ushering our Continent and its Organization into the next Century. It was time to modernize the General Secretariat and to rationalize its methods of work making use of the new management techniques and information technologies.

In deciding to embark on this path, we were all conscious that any restructuring exercise is a painful one which, therefore, requires courage and commitment by all. Since we were all aware of the difficulties for any institution to reform itself, we agreed that the study on the restructuring exercise should be done by an independent Consultancy Firm which was identified and subsequently selected by the Committee on Structural Reform. The Consultancy Firm was given clear Terms of Reference which were also approved by the Committee.

Despite the limited time-frame, the Consultants were able to produce their report on time. I wish to express my appreciation to them. The report which is comprehensive and addresses all the outputs included in the Terms of Reference, is now tabled for the consideration of the Committee. To assist you in considering the report, the General Secretariat has prepared a document containing its comments on the report which will be circulated to the members of the Committee in due course. These comments are the product of wide consultations within the General Secretariat which I personally thought it was important to undertake to ensure the maximum contribution to this important exercise.

The report of the Consultants together with the comments of the General Secretariat shall therefore be submitted for the consideration of the Committee. At this stage, I do not think it is appropriate for me to go into the details of the proposals made by the Consultants and the reaction by the General

Secretariat. The General Secretariat stands ready to assist the Committee and provide it with all necessary information to allow it make informed recommendation to Council.

I would like, however, to stress the fact that the General Secretariat which is aware of the implications of the restructuring exercise for it and its staff is nonetheless positively disposed towards this important exercise. Indeed, there is a realization on the part of the General Secretariat that this exercise is inevitable if its efficiency and effectiveness were to be improved to better serve its Member States. There is also the realization that this exercise should be conducted in the most objective and transparent manner and should be implemented in the best conditions possible for the staff who might be affected. The restructuring exercise has no other purpose than to provide the Organization with a more rationalized, streamlined and efficient General Secretariat. It should be conducted in a spirit of equity and fairness. It should also be conducted bearing in mind that the decisions to be made will not only affect the future of our Institution but also have some implications to some of the people who serve the Institution.

Finally, I wish to stress the fact that the restructuring exercise poses a great challenge to all of us Member States and General Secretariat alike. We should endeavour to face it with a sense of purpose and vision, with commitment, wisdom and determination.